



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
NASHVILLE DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
P. O. BOX 1070  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37202-1070

March 23, 2007

IN REPLY REFER TO

Project Planning Branch

TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES:

The Corps of Engineers, Nashville District (Corps), is preparing a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to evaluate actions at Wolf Creek Dam, Lake Cumberland, Russell County, Kentucky. These actions include emergency lowering of lake levels, already taken, and to consider additional alternatives to reduce risk of failure.

Wolf Creek Dam which forms Lake Cumberland, completed in the early 1950s, was built on a karst geology using accepted engineering practices of the day. Since the 1960s seepage through the dam's foundation has been a concern. Repairs have been implemented at various times including grout injection into the foundation and installing a diaphragm wall through about two thirds of the earthen embankment. Seepage problems have recently reappeared. A comprehensive plan for repairs, including an Environmental Assessment with a signed Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was approved in July 2005; however, these repairs will take a number of years to implement.

Until the repairs are sufficiently completed, the Corps determined that it was in the public's interest to lower the lake levels to reduce pressure on the weakened foundations. This was necessary to ensure the public's health, safety, and welfare. The need for action regarding the Wolf Creek Dam was so urgent and compelling that there was insufficient time to follow usual National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures before the Corps made decisions and began implementation. Therefore, on January 19, 2007, the Corps invoked its authority "Emergency Actions" under 33 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 230.8 and declared an emergency, made decisions, and took necessary actions. The President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) was consulted regarding alternative arrangements under NEPA pursuant to 40 CFR 1506.11.

The temporary target elevation is currently 680 feet above mean sea level (msl) at Wolf Creek Dam. This elevation was selected because it provides the greatest reduction in stress to the dam without creating other public health and safety

concerns. This operation will be in effect until repair of the dam or new information allows the pool elevation to be raised. The pool may also be further dropped if conditions create the need. The Corps recognizes that by lowering the lake level there will likely be significant environmental and economic consequences in the following areas:

- (1) cold water fisheries both in the lake and tailwater;
- (2) water quality throughout the Cumberland River;
- (3) federally listed threatened and endangered species;
- (4) designated uses of the waterway including fish and aquatic life, livestock watering and wildlife, irrigation;
- (5) and economics including electric power production, municipal and industrial water supply, recreation, navigation, flood damage reduction, and disruption to communities, jobs, and other related factors.

By way of this letter, we are soliciting comments from the public; federal, state and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate impacts of these proposed activities. To make these decisions, comments are used to assess impacts on public health and safety, endangered species, historic properties, water quality, water supply and conservation, economics, aesthetics, wetlands, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shore erosion and accretion, recreation, energy needs, general environmental effects, and in general, the needs and welfare of the people. We encourage comments not only about the immediate area of the project, but also of plans or proposals for any other development that may impact or influence resources within the proposed project area.

This letter also serves to initiate the public involvement requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. Section 106, implemented by regulations at 36 CFR 800, requires the Corps of Engineers to consider the effects of its undertakings on historic properties. Under the emergency provisions at 36CFR800.12 the Corps provided notification to the President's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, relevant federally recognized tribes, and the Kentucky State Historic Preservation Officer. Further, the Corps has initiated an archeological investigation to determine

if historic properties have been or will be adversely affected by the undertaking. All on-going and proposed activities and resulting findings pertaining to historic properties will be accomplished in consultation with the Kentucky State Historic Preservation Officer and other offices as necessary.

Maps of the proposed project area are enclosed for your benefit. If you have any information, comments, or questions, please contact Chip Hall by writing to the above address or by calling (615) 736-7666. You may also e-mail your comments to: *Lake.Modification@lrn02.usace.army.mil*. Please submit your comments no later than 30 days from the above date to assure evaluation and inclusion in the process. Your participation is appreciated.

Sincerely,

  
Steven J. Roemhildt, P.E.  
Lieutenant Colonel  
Corps of Engineers  
District Engineer

Enclosure

